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Oct. 4, 2016

To: Honolulu City Council
From: The Surfrider Foundation and the Rise Above Plastics Coalition
Re: Support for Bill 59 (Bag Ban Amendment)
Date of Hearing: Oct. 5th, Kapolei

Aloha, Council Members,

As the Hawaii Manager of the Surfrider Foundation, I'm writing in strong support of Bill 59. Our Rise Above Plastics coalition consists of many different environmental groups, and we are all committed to passing this bill and reducing the litter and environmental hazards of single-use plastics.

Grocery bags are one of the most littered items in Hawaii and across the country, and they are expensive to clean up because they foul up recycling equipment and clog storm drains. Along with the litter and cleanup problems, they also pose a threat to many marine creatures. More than 400 marine species and half of all sea turtles have been documented to ingest or become entangled in plastics, including many endangered species.

We appreciate your hard work in passing the original plastic bag ban and your continued efforts to improve that law by eliminating the loophole that allowed for so-called "reusable" plastic bags, which are thicker and even more of an environmental problem.

The Surfrider Foundation and its coalition partners agree that it would be better to ban all types of single-use plastic check-out bags and keep this law consistent with the policies on Maui, Kauai and the Big Island.

Following successful bills in Portland, OR and Austin, TX, we ask that the definition of reusable bags be amended so that they are "a minimum of 4 mils thick" (up from 3 mils) and made of "non-film plastic."

Mahalo for your time and leadership on this issue and please feel free to contact me if you have any questions. We are proud that Hawaii is the first state in the nation to ban single-use plastic bags!

Aloha,

Stuart Coleman

Stuart H. Coleman
Hawaiian Manager

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COUNCIL